

Indiana House of Representatives

News and Information

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VAN HAAFTEN TO BMV: USE CARE IN SHUTTING AREA LICENSE BRANCHES

INDIANAPOLIS – With additional license branches across Indiana expected to be closed in the near future, State Rep. Trent Van Haaften (D-Mount Vernon) has urged Bureau of Motor Vehicles officials to take particular care before shutting any operations in Southwest Indiana.

In a letter to BMV Commissioner Joel Silverman, Van Haaften asked for confirmation whether the bureau is in the process of taking steps to close license branches in Gibson, Posey and Vanderburgh Counties. The lawmaker said he was making the request to prepare himself and the people living in the 76th House District for any potential closings.

Silverman already has announced plans to close 12 branches, located mostly in northern Indiana. News reports have indicated that anywhere from 20 to 70 additional offices could be closed in the months to come.

Noting that the early announcements of closings did not impact Southwest Indiana, Van Haaften told Silverman that it was important to keep area residents as informed as possible of the potential that area branches would be shut down. BMV officials announced the first 12 closings before conducting public hearings, a move required under state law.

"The elimination of the people's business should be taken with great care and caution," Van Haaften said in his letter to Silverman. "In the language used by the corporate world, the 'shareholders' of government services are the 6.2 million Hoosiers that you and I both now serve. All Hoosiers, not just those of Southwest Indiana, deserve an open process with adequate input when the decision to take away their services is made."

In the event that the BMV considers closing branches in the area, Van Haaften asked Silverman for information that shows the yearly cost of operating the offices in Gibson, Posey and Vanderburgh Counties. This information would include numbers of workers and their salaries, rental cost of buildings, utility costs and other operating expenses. Such information, Van Haaften noted, would help identify whether the branches are operating in the red or black.

In addition, the lawmaker asked for a listing of every license branch in Indiana, whether those offices are operating at a profit or loss, and the criteria used to determine if a branch should be shut down.

By having this information, Van Haaften said residents will be able to determine the actual reasons behind any decision to close a branch, rather than engaging in speculation based on rumor.

Van Haaften said it was critical to keep the branches open in all three counties, particularly in a location like Posey County, where offices in Mount Vernon and Poseyville must serve around 27,000 residents.

"The Poseyville branch serves an area that is primarily rural and is conveniently located to citizens/shareholders of both Posey and Gibson Counties," Van Haaften said. "Without this branch, the distance of travel in both miles and manner of roads traveled would be an unwarranted deprivation of services that these citizen/shareholders deserve from us.

"Vanderburgh County is home to a number of license branches, since it is one of the largest population areas in our state," he added. "These license branches serve both rural and urban citizens, most of whom depend on transportation to these locations."